



A GREEK HAND-MIRROR

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A GREEK HAND-MIRROR IN THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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It is but little more than twenty years since Rayet, in the text to Plate 22 of the *Monuments de l'art antique*, commented upon the strange fact that Greek hand-mirrors, such as are known from Attic vase-paintings and reliefs to have been in common use, had not been found. The lacuna signalized by Rayet has since been filled. Besides the very early hand-mirrors found by Dr. Tsountas at Mycenæ, there now exist in the museums of Athens and other cities not a few such mirrors or parts of mirrors, of Greek manufacture, and dating from *ca.* 600 B. C. onward. One class has the handle cast in one piece with the disk. In half a dozen known instances the handle is covered with reliefs of early style, while examples with plain handles, from the Argive Heræum and elsewhere, exist in considerable numbers in the National Museum of Athens. Another class, which was certainly in use throughout the fifth century B. C., and probably later, does not have a complete handle of bronze, but a short shank, which is either of one piece with the disk or cast separately, and which evidently fitted into a handle of wood, bone, or ivory, now generally lost. In case the shank is of a separate piece, it is likely to have some ornamental form where it joins the disk, *e. g.*, Ionic or quasi-Ionic volutes with palmettes, as in the examples published in the *Ἐφημερίς Ἀρχαιολογική*, 1884, Plate VI, 4 and 5; a siren, as in one from Cyprus in the British Museum (*Catalogue of Bronzes*, No. 246); an Eros, as in the one published in the *Jahrbuch des archäologischen Instituts*, 1888, p. 246; or a Victory, as in one in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris (*Catalogue des bronzes*, No. 1349).

It is to this class that the mirror represented in Plate I belongs. It was bought in 1890 of Messrs. Rollin et Feuardent, of Paris, by Martin A. Ryerson, Esq., of Chicago, and has been deposited by him in the Art Institute of this city. It is said, on what evidence is unknown, to have been found in Etruria. At all events, it is clearly of Greek, and not Etruscan, manufacture.

The mirror-disk has a diameter of nineteen centimeters. The reflecting surface is very slightly, and at present not quite uniformly, convex. The edge of the disk is ornamented with the "egg" pattern (not visible in the illustration), within which is a fine bead pattern. The back of the disk is plain.

The handle is at present detached from the disk, but the original connection is sufficiently guaranteed by traces upon the latter. At the back the bronze part of the handle is prolonged upward into a palmette, which served to make the attachment to the disk secure. In front the ornamental feature consists of a relief of a siren in

front view, with recurved wings, surrounded by scrolls and palmettes. A strip of bead pattern above the siren's head matches that on the disk. The volutes of the two lower and smaller palmettes turn outward. Those of the two upper were intended to turn inward, but, through an inadvertence of the artist, one of the volutes of the upper palmette on the left is reversed in direction. The entire composition may be compared with that on a standing mirror from Hermione in the Louvre (Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire*, Vol. II, p. 702, c), where again a slight asymmetry is observable. Of the two the present specimen has the advantage in the compactness and appearance of solidity of the design.

An especial interest is lent to the Chicago mirror by the fact that the handle proper, into which the shank of the bronze attachment fits, is here preserved. The circumstance is unusual, and, as far as I know, unique, among Greek hand-mirrors of the historical period. As the result of a microscopic examination kindly made by Professor F. R. Lillie, it appears that this handle is of bone, and not of ivory. It is eleven centimeters in length, and is bored through from end to end. The bronze shank, now securely in place, seems to extend about three and one-half centimeters into the tube. In form the handle is not quite cylindrical, but tapers downward, until at the bottom it expands into a sort of collar. It is now much corroded, but the original polished surface is preserved here and there. There is no decoration, except that of incised rings; a group of three at the top, then two, then one, then two, and finally two on the collar.

For determining the date of this mirror there is no evidence except the style of the bronze relief. The workmanship on the face of the siren is not sharp enough to afford a basis of judgment, but the composition as a whole finds its nearest analogies in objects assignable to the fifth century B. C., such as the bronze handles figured in the *Antiquités du Bosphore cimmérien*, Plate XLIV, 3 and 7, and the mirror from Hermione in the Louvre, referred to above. The recurved wings of the siren, contrasted with the more truthful shape of those to be seen, *e. g.*, on the hydria figured by Professor Furtwängler in the *Sammlung Sabouroff*, text to Plate CXLIX, if not decisive, are at least favorable to this dating. So likewise is the character of the palmettes, with their relatively large volutes. Signs of the archaic period, such as may be seen in some of the small bronze sirens of the Athenian Acropolis (Ridder, *Bronzes de l'acropole*, figs. 112-14), being absent, 450 B. C. may be taken as an approximate date.



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